



IS HIGH BLOOD PRESSURE REALLY A BIG DEAL?

YES! When your blood pressure is high, your heart has to work harder than it should to pump blood to all parts of the body. **High blood pressure is called the “silent killer” because most people feel healthy and don’t even know that they have it.** If it is not treated, high blood pressure can cause:

- stroke
- heart attack
- kidney problems
- eye problems
- death

High blood pressure is also called hypertension.

PREVENT HIGH BLOOD PRESSURE.

If your blood pressure is not high now, take steps to keep it healthy. Here’s how:

- Aim for a healthy weight.
- Eat less salt and sodium.
- Eat more fruits and vegetables.
- Be physically active every day.
- Don’t smoke.



*Promoting and protecting the health of the public
and the environment.*



**The Heart of
South Carolina**

SC DHEC
www.scdhec.gov/cvh

Source:

*U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
National Institutes of Health
National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute*

Your Guide to

Blood Pressure

South Carolina Department of Health
and Environmental Control

WHAT IS BLOOD PRESSURE?

Blood pressure is the force of blood pushing against your blood vessels. Your blood pressure is at its greatest when your heart contracts and is pumping blood. This is **systolic blood pressure**. When your heart rests between beats, your blood pressure falls. This is called **diastolic blood pressure**. Blood pressure is always given as these two numbers: the systolic and diastolic pressures. The numbers are usually written one above or before the other, with systolic first, for example, 120/80 or $\frac{120}{80}$.



KNOW YOUR NUMBER.

- Have your blood pressure checked. It is easy, quick, and painless.
- Your blood pressure should be checked by your health care provider at least once each year.
- If you have high blood pressure, it should be checked more often. You can have your blood pressure checked at your doctor's office, your neighborhood clinic, health fairs at your church, your local fire department or emergency medical service (EMS), or some shopping malls.

CHECK BELOW TO SEE WHERE YOU FIT IN.

Blood pressure categories (adults age 18 and over)			
Category	Systolic (mm/Hg)		Diastolic (mm/Hg)
Normal	Less than 120	and	Less than 80
Prehypertension	120-139	or	80-89
Hypertension	140 or higher	or	90 or higher
<i>Strive for a blood pressure of 120/80 or less.</i>			

LOWER YOUR HIGH BLOOD PRESSURE.

If you have high blood pressure, you may be able to lower or keep your high blood pressure down.

Practice these steps:

- Maintain a healthy weight.
- Be more active every day.
- Eat fewer foods high in salt and sodium.
- Cut back or cut out alcoholic beverages, if you drink.

You may also need medicine to lower your high blood pressure. Tell your doctor about any medicine you are already taking.

Follow these tips if you take medicine:

- Take your medicine the way your doctor tells you. To help you remember, plan to take your medicine at the same time every day.
- Tell the doctor right away if the medicine makes you feel strange or sick. The doctor may make changes in your medicine.
- Make sure you don't miss any days. Refill your prescription before you use up your medicine.
- If you do miss a day, don't take "catch up" or extra pills.
- Have your blood pressure checked often to be sure your medicine is working the way you and your doctor planned.
- Don't stop taking your medicine if your blood pressure is okay—that means the medicine is working.